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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the themes of individual and group processes, on the conscious level, as well as the main purpose of a work group, and asserts that psychoanalytical theory and knowledge are a tool for educators. The two problems studied are motivating student teachers to creative action within the small group structure and dealing with student anxiety created by uncertainty and worry about whether the group will allow room for members' personal thoughts and by one's overly self-critical attitude regarding the worth of one's own thoughts to the group. The focus of this paper is the development and formation of one small group (3-8 members) into a work group (a group of members interacting to support the work of the whole group) via individual and group processes. The preconditions of group process are motivation, distance, finding of joint limits, clarifying the basic task, commitment, and a well-qualified tutor to intervene when obstacles arise. The task of this particular workgroup came into existence through discussion of the group's own needs. The psychoanalytical theory of Dewey presented maintains that an individual interprets his outer world through his inner one, formed by previous events. Group activity provides an opportunity for conscious reevaluation of one's understanding and facilitates reflective thinking. (CK)

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMING A WORK GROUP IN SMALL GROUP TEACHING

BACKGROUND

The development of small group teaching poses a great challenge for all education today, especially for university-level education. Group work in various forms has been carried out for a long time. This does not, however, mean that all features of this method would have been realized. Educators should be made to develop their methods more consciously. The challenge also lies within the sphere of reflective teaching research.

A small group has to achieve the status of a work group by undergoing two processes. This article discusses the terms of individual and group processes, also on the unconscious level, as well as the main purpose of a work group. The psychoanalytical theory and knowledge offer tool for educators. The small group is viewed here as a university-level challenge.

The small group has been utilized in many forms during the past decades and it has also been harnessed for various pedegogical purposes. In spite of all this, the human rules governing a successful group process have not always been taken into consideration (e.g. Bion, W., 1961). As such basic rules have not been understood, they have not been taken into account in the planning or usage of groups either on university-level or elsewhere. Thus a significant part of the oppotunities a group as a learning method offers have remained ununtilized.

Creative action cannot be forced or commanded and one cannot be obligated to it. For this reason it is important that the will and preconditions for it can be found. The group process can not be controlled from the outside and it slows down considerably if the need for grouping is not recognized. It is dependant on the individual's desire to join the group and , on the other hand, the group's ability to receive the individual as a member of full standing. In this respect the student's motivation may create a problem while organizing small group teaching. However, we have to assume that basic motivation does exist and that the problem of motivation can be solved, since the students have initially applied for the studies in question. For instance, students of pedagogics have, or at least should have, motivation for working on problems of educational psychology.

A second problem is student anxiety created by uncertainty and worry about whether the group will allow room for members' personal thoughts. It is also increased by one's own overly critical attitude: "Are my own thoughts valuable and useful enough to be expressed in a group?".

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Definition of concepts

A small group is a group with 3-8 members. A small group is more capable of functioning as a group than a larger group. However, a small group reaches the status of a work group only after having formed into one, through the grouping process.

A work group is a group, in which the fruitful interaction between group members supports the work of the whole group. This prerequisites that no tension preventing interaction is present. If tension exists, the group loses part of its resources or is unable to utilize them. On an individual level this means that the developmental process does not proceed in an optimal fashion. The individual does not get a change to get acquianted with his/her creative potential.

GROUP DYNAMIC RULES CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GROUP

1) A group always forms itself around a task, it is created out of joint interest. The interest is required in order to motivate the members' belonging to the group. (The student teachers' small group joint interest could be e.g. professional growth). The task can be either given or spontaniously created (compare: rescue procedure in an accident).

2) Grouping is needed before the group can function as a work group.

Outline of the study

This study deals with the development and formation of one small group (a course on experiental and holistic management) into a work group via two processes: a) the individual and b) the group process. The text has been organized according to Figure 1. First the pocess will be examined from the individual's point of view and thereafter the group process in the forming of a work group.

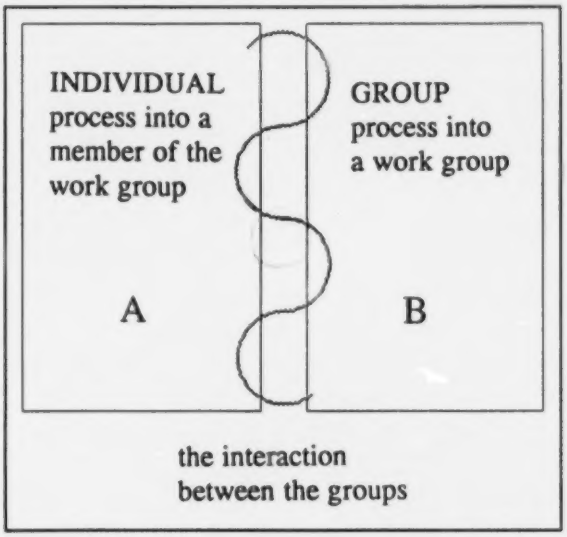

Figure 1 Outline of the study

The goal of a small group is to analyze the two above-mentioned paralel processes reinforcing one another.

THE COURSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PROCESSES (described on the basis of one small group session)

A. The individual process of becoming a group member

We carried out a case study research on the grouping process in the following manner: The group (consisting of 10 persons, who had signed for the group) at its first session (90 minutes) was given the task of verbalizing the familiar thoughts and images that sping to mind 'here and now'. This instruction was supposed to ignite the grouping process, based on the assumption that the group members' innate need to join a group will start the process.

At the same time the instruction: a) gave space to personal conscious and unconscious need and sources of anxiety, which exist in relation to the group, seeking to be resolved, and b) denied the possibility to hide behind familiar routines (e.g. a round of introductions or concious guidance), with the help of which individuals rather build barriers to subdue their creativity than to release it (compare: defensive ruotines, Argyris & Schön).

The individual process can be summarized into three phases:

* Expression of needs
  - the need to seek security
  - the need for space

* A process in which a response to the needs is sought from the group.

* The result of the process
  - a response to needs has been obtained
  - previous defences have been dropped
  - a trust in the group has been created

The preconditions of the individual process and the sequence of events

The process has to be allowed to take its course on the unconscious level. The assosiation method generates confusion when one engages into this sort of work. It is vital to give space for confusion. When confusion is shared, it is replaced by the recognition that one is not alone or that confusion is not scary or disgraceful; thus the sense of security increases. When one gets an opportunity to be confused and to share the feeling without suppression or denial, the confusion takes on a whole new meaning. An experience unleashing creativity springs up.

A contact with the unconscious in needed to understand what it wishes to tell us 'in its infinite wisdom'. The reason why the method of free association fist causes confusion is that one fails to see any 'sense' in it. When all those concerned together realize the confusion and uncertainty,

they do not appear disgraceful anymore. This creates security in the group. A the initially private and disgraceful uncertainty is seen as common, it is possible to make it public at the same time. Thus it assumes a more postive meaning. At that point also the excess defences limiting creativity can be disgarded.

At the session, there took place the following developmental process, in which two intertwined, yet separate, subprocesses that appeared to support and reinforce one another, could be deciphered. At first the group members' spontaneous, associative expressions appeared scattered and disconnected on the surface, but at a closer look they portrayed a unified and coherent developmental process. It was associated with the individual's needs in relation to the group on one hand and on the other hand with the preconditions the group has to meet to be able to function as a work group.

The discussion proceeded into a personal level, organized dialogue only towards the very end of the 90 minute session. Thus far, all the 'talking' had been a part of the subconscious interaction process. In this process the subconscious reacts to the conscious of the other group members. The group behaved as if they had sought for an answer to the following questions:

- What do I expect from the group?
- What does the group expect from me?

While investigating the logic behind the associations it all made sense:

- The need for security and
- the need to find personal space

As the process progressed futher the sense of security increased. Before the sufficient level of security in relation to the group was reached, the members felt it necessary to seek allies. Howevr, this was only a transition phase. As the level of security further increased, the group was able give up both the allies and other old defences. At that point the group began to enjoy being together and their own creativity. A trust in the group had been established and the group could accept and assimilate individual differences. This was a factor that increased the group's joint creativity.

B. The preconditions of the group process and the sequence of events

The group process requires the following elements:

1. Motivation
2. Distance, giving up of the past (room for the new in the mind)
3. Finding of joint limits
4. Clarifying of the basic task

A joint culture (=the creation of the basic philosophy)

5. Commitment

1. Motivation
Motivation already existed in this group - they had all come to join the course of experiential learning and holistic management. Thus no energy was required to boost motivation.

2. Distance
Distance means giving up the old and the familiar which would take space from or interest off the group. Being a group member requires distancing oneself from the past that occupies one's mind.

3. Limits
The group has to define its limits. These include the external and internal preconditions which assure the group a peaceful working environment.

4. A joint culture
The work group has to create a joint basic philosophy and common norms. The joint culture is needed to serve the basic task. At the point where the trust is formed, the individual commits him/herself to the joint basic task, limits and philosophy

5.Commitment
As the group has gone through the grouping process to become a work group, it will be able to function also without the physical physical presence of the leader or even the group. Being a member of a work group requires not only commitment to the group in the physical sense but also personal commitment to work as a member also outside the group on an individual level. As the grouping process has taken place, the group develops a joint conscious perception of what should be done and how.

The tutor

Th group process requires a tutor, who will assists the group in the grouping phase. The tutor has to be well qualified, which means that the tutor has to understand the dynamics of the grouping process. The tutor will step in, if the group comes to a standstill, e.g. if the members won't listen to each other or give room to one another. In this case the tutor did not initiate group work by the customary introductions. It was consciously left out, since it limits people's chances for individual existance. Thus the tutor intervenes only when obstacles arise. The mere presence of the tutor is enough to create a safe atmosphere.

Conclusions

The group was not given any specific assignment.Only room for grouping was provided. The "task" carried out by the group came into existance through the group's own needs. The members formed themselves, entirely unconsciously question and answers. Some small groups do not form into work groups if the members are not interested in the assignment at hand. In this case the forming of a work group was to be expected since all members were well motivated for the course. Thus the group exhibits all the theoretical elements shown in Figure 2.

The individual process into a group member:	**The process into a work group:**
"What do I expect of the group?" "What does the group expect of me?"	"Which conditions must the group fulfil to be able serve needs of belonging and creating something new?"
- the need for security	
- the need for space	- Motivation to belong (approx. 30 min.)
- the need for support (alliences)	- distance
- giving up of defences	- limits
- giving up of 'allies'	- norms
- trust	- joint basic philophy
(n. 90 min)	- commitment
a liberated creative individual	a work group

The basic task group work is to create good collaboration. As a sideproduct it also has therapeutic importance. As teaching is basically group work, it is important to leran the necessary skills during education. Teacher is the tutor of collaboration. As a group leader his/her main task is to make sure that the group meets both the internal and external preconditions required for functioning.

DELIBERATION OF BACKGROUND THEORIES

Our test is based on psychoanalytical theory and research, which have a long tradition in the study of the external and internal rules of human growth and development, and their interaction. We also familiarized ourselves with Dewey's philosophical thinking because there are plenty of similarities between it and the knowledge produced by the psychoanalytical research and experience. In this respect the psychoanalytical research has verified Dewey's theory.

Psychoanalytical research has shown that the individual interprets his/her outer world through the inner one. The inner world is formed out of a series of previous events that are evolved into networks of meanings. Thus the previous events influence the individual's orientation to new situations.

Psychoanalytical research, both its methods and theorization, brings about chances for deepening and organizing Dewey's thinking as well as the concept of reflection. The research provides tools especially in fields where the existing tools have proved insufficient. Psychoanalysis offers a chance to learn to understand individuals as unique creatures with their own specific preconditions for development. This sort of understanding has been lacking in education. Here attention should be paid to whether the situations intended as learning experiences can be considered educative.

The main method of psychoanalysis, 'free association', helps to establish a contact to the unconscious and to reach the inner meaning structures relevant to the situation at hand. Via the 'reflective method',the irrational material becomes rationally comprehensible. In practice, the unconscious of one group member answers to that of another, and the pause helps to study the images created "here and now".

People do behave in this manner, but unconsciously. The problem is that this process is so instantaneous and and thus remain unnoticed. When this happens directly due to previous experinences and the individual meanings derived thereof, the individual fails to realistically reasses the new elements and possibilities within the situation. The individual merely repeats him/herself. He/she becomes a prisoner of previous experiences, who is incapable of learning anything new. Since the process is unconscious, it can not be remidied before it has become conscious, in other words, is reached by the individual in question.

Pausing to study the spontaneous images of "here and now" provides an opportunity to realize the existance of both defences and the underlying problems. It makes conscious re-evaluation and reprocessing of them as well as their inclusion into the deeper understanding possible. The group facilitates this process. When someone can verbalize what another is only sensing, it does help. Thus collaboration increases consciousness.

It is worth noticing that also Dewey has noticed this difficulty created by defensive behaviour in relation to development. In defensive behaviour the person solves the situation according to previous experience and solutions made in connection with it, without considering the new possible solutions offered by the new situation.

THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND INTERACTION

Dewey somehow refers to both development as a process and as interaction. He says as follows: "In a way, we do something to the situation, but it also does something to us". By studying the interaction processes we have a chance to find means for affecting the psychological development of the individual and the group.

The problem of making the individual under instruction to reflect upon his/her experience afterwards is not the only one, there is also the problem of how educators could be persuaded to develop their methods more aware of A) the hindrances of development of the individual or the group to be educated and B) the individual features hindering the development of the person being educated.

The educator's tarks is, in a way, to create such circumstances for learning, with which the individuals with their own abilities and needs could naturally interact. The teacher should have good grounds to expect that the procedure in question will help to create such an educative situation which supports the development of both the individual and the group. When obtaining these grounds, it is of great significance to learn to understand more deeply those processes that take place between the educator and the person being educated as well as the processes taking place among those being educated, their interactive situations, especially in groups. Therefore it is important to learn to direct group work into a direction which supports growth and development.

What sort of a role does the tecaher have to assume to be best able to facilitate group work and thus the individual growth of each member. Dewey warns teachers in general from acting as "authorities" or "dictators", but urges such behaviour when it appears to be in accordance with the group's 'best interest'. This is the way in which the leader of acreative team should act. He/she remains in the background, monitoring the group's work and intervenes only if the work is hindered.

A CHALLENGE FOR REFLECTION RESEARCH

When refering to reflection and the increase of consciousness we should employ the concept of the unconscious and deliberate upon its manifestation in humans and their interaction, for instance in group work, and how it functions. A great challenge for reflection research is to consider how the process of cognizance proceeds, what should one be aware of and what function does the unconscious serve in a person; why does it exist and how could an educator learn to better understand and utilize it when selecting teaching strategies.

In his description of the process needed for the inner reflection on the way 'from confusion to clarity', Dewey presents refelction in five phases. The group's work starts from those questions, of which the group has conflicting opinions or uncertainty. Dewey talks implicitly about the unconscious nature of the feature in the initial phase. He says that "in fact we know the problem as a whole only when we seek means to solve it". - Herein lies the benifit of free association - or of reflection: We can not become conscious of the unconscious. But by monitoring our behaviour and impulses, and by studying the their background factors, we get into contact with the unconscious elements that have produced those impulses and specific behavioural patterns. in other words the challenge of reflection is to let the unconscious speak!

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